

Quality Feedback

What Is It and How to Give It

Writing "Nice job!" on the top of a student's paper is encouraging, but is it helpful feedback? Experts offer advice about how to give useful and usable feedback.

"The most common pitfall is thinking that giving personal praise is the same as giving feedback," says Helen Timperley in the article "The Power of Feedback" in the *Review of Educational Research*.

Although praise is much appreciated and extremely valuable in its own right, it doesn't necessarily provide information that will move a student toward a specific learning target.

"Feedback is value-neutral help on worthy tasks. It describes what the learner did and did not do in relation to her goals," Grant Wiggins explains in the article "Assessment as Feedback," for the Johns Hopkins School of Education website. "It is actionable information, and it empowers the student to make intelligent adjustments when she applies it to her next attempt to perform."

On his blog, *Big Ideas*, Wiggins offers examples:

- "Good job!" is not feedback.
- "You used many interesting details to make your characters come alive in this story," is feedback.
- B- is not feedback.
- "Your thesis is an interesting one, but you have not provided sufficient evidence to support it" is [feedback].

Susan M. Brookhart, author of *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students*, says that feedback should appeal to both the mind (cognition) and the heart (motivation), because it gives students information they need that helps them understand where they are in their learning and what to do next.

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Education

Update

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What Is the Purpose of Education?

"What is the purpose of education? This question agitates scholars, teachers, statesmen, every group, in fact, of thoughtful men and women," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in the 1930 article, "Good Citizenship: The Purpose of Education," in *Pictorial Review*.

If you were to ask even a relatively small group of teachers, administrators, students, parents, community members, business leaders, and policymakers to address the question of purpose, how difficult do you think it would be to reach a consensus?

You might have better luck asking, "What is the meaning of life?"

In the United States, historically, the purpose of education has evolved according to the needs of society. Education's primary purpose has ranged from instructing youth in religious doctrine, to preparing them to live in a democracy, to assimilating immigrants into mainstream society, to preparing workers for the industrialized 20th century workplace.

And now, as educators prepare young people for their futures in a world that is rapidly changing, what is the goal? To create adults who can compete in a global economy? To create lifelong learners? To create emotionally healthy adults who can engage in meaningful relationships?

Yes.

"There are many different points of view on this topic," says Jonathan Cohen, cofounder and president of the National School Climate Center. "I think that my view, and most people's view, is that the purpose of

education is to support children in developing the skills, the knowledge, and the dispositions that will allow them to be responsible, contributing members of their community—their democratically-informed community. Meaning, to be a good friend, to be a good mate, to be able to work, and to contribute to the well-being of the community."

Not only should children learn civic knowledge—how the electoral college works, the history of political parties, and so on—but they also need to master civic skills, which include respecting others, working collaboratively, acting in a way that is fair and just, and being an active participant in the life of the community, Cohen says.

A Disjoint Between Ideals and Actions

Are we on track to fulfill this vision? "We are not on track," says Cohen, who believes that the No Child Left Behind Act's narrow focus neglects social and emotional learning, although they are interrelated with intellectual learning. Cohen's National School Climate Center (www.schoolclimate.org/climate) is an organization that helps schools integrate crucial social and emotional learning with academic instruction.

→ MINING THE RESEARCH

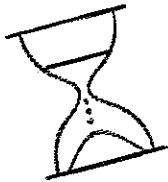
The Principal Perspective, by the Center for Public Education, looks at how the roles and responsibilities of principals have evolved. Read this report and other recent research at www.ascd.org/miningtheresearch.

1991

"The one continuing purpose of education, since ancient times, has been to bring people to as full a realization as possible of what it is to be a human being. Other statements of educational purpose have also been widely accepted: to develop the intellect, to serve social needs, to contribute to the economy, to create an effective work force, to prepare students for a job or career, to promote a particular social or political system. These

purposes offered are undesirably limited in scope, and in some instances they conflict with the broad purpose I have indicated; they imply a distorted human existence. The broader humanistic purpose includes all of them, and goes beyond them, for it seeks to encompass all the dimensions of human experience."

—Arthur W. Foshay, "The Curriculum Matrix: Transcendence and Mathematics," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 1991



"[The purpose of education] has changed from that of producing a *literate society* to that of producing a *learning society*."

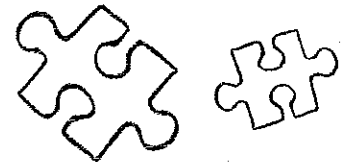
—Margaret Ammons, Associate Secretary of ASCD, "Purpose and Program: How Does Commitment Today Differ from That in Other Periods," *Educational Leadership*, October 1964

1957

"The main purpose of the American school is to provide for the fullest possible development of each learner for living morally, creatively, and productively in a democratic society."

—The ASCD Committee on Platform of Beliefs, *Educational Leadership*, January 1957

1964



1934

"The purpose of education has always been to every one, in essence, the same—to give the young the things they need in order to develop in an orderly, sequential way into members of society. This was the purpose of the education given to a little aboriginal in the Australian bush before the coming of the white man. It was the purpose of the education of youth in the golden age of Athens. It is the purpose of education today, whether this education goes on in a one-room school in the mountains



"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason but no morals. ... We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."

—Martin Luther King Jr., speech at Morehouse College, 1948

1948

of Tennessee or in the most advanced, progressive school in a radical community. But to develop into a member of society in the Australian bush had nothing in common with developing into a member of society in ancient Greece, and still less with what is needed today. Any education is, in its forms and methods, an outgrowth of the needs of the society in which it exists."

—John Dewey, "Individual Psychology and Education," *The Philosopher*, 12, 1934



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In the Classroom with Brad Kuntz

Don't Wait Until It's Too Late

Brad Kuntz

Are some of your students struggling to comprehend content while others are feeling bored and unchallenged? Through both differentiated and individualized instruction, we as teachers do our best to meet our students' diverse needs.

Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we cannot meet all of these needs during classtime. For this reason, it's important to put into place a schoolwide, systematic intervention program to provide students with additional support.

Designing an all-encompassing, closely monitored system of interventions is an enormous but essential task. Such a system requires the attention and effort of the people within the school who know students best. It also requires plenty of what every staff seems to be lacking: time.

To design an intervention system, you have to seriously examine the current system, determining whether current components of the program are actually working or if they exist simply because they've always existed. Second, staff must engage in thoughtful, creative dialogue that produces innovative new ideas and moves you toward the goal of remediating struggling students and enriching successful students. You must create a flow chart of student intervention steps that is consistent throughout the building and understood by both students and teachers.

Collecting and analyzing data is crucial to the success of an intervention program. Perhaps it's time to admit that an old practice no longer serves a purpose. Or maybe data will prove that a new idea is effective. A school should only be putting its time and effort into a system that has proven successful. You can use data to garner support from administration or school board members for further changes, especially if they are ideas that shake up traditional ways of thinking.

Designing an effective intervention system requires looking closely at the type of students you're targeting and their particular needs, while not neglecting the needs of other types of students. For instance, the self-starters in your school who are chugging along just fine may really benefit from extra time in which they can study and complete



homework. The advanced students seeking to reach new levels of achievement may need opportunities for enrichment. The failing students may require one-on-one time from their teachers. And then there are the students who simply aren't putting forth any effort. Does your intervention system serve the needs of each of these students?

Your school may wish to develop a targeted study hall program, peer-tutoring opportunities, an advisory situation where students are strategically assigned, a parental academic alert communication system, or more likely a combination of these and other ideas. Or perhaps with some creativity, your school can develop a half-day intervention program for struggling students on a weekly basis.

The key is to take action, rather than talk an idea to death. You can work out the kinks once the system is up and running. If the intervention program is designed in a way that focuses on learning rather than punishment, holds students accountable, and is consistent across the entire institution, you will see failing grades rise over time. **EU**

Brad Kuntz teaches Spanish and environmental leadership at Gladstone High School in Gladstone, Ore., and is a 2011 winner of ASCD's Outstanding Young Educator Award.



What Is the Purpose of Education?

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In his *Harvard Educational Review* article "Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Academic Education: Creating a Climate for Learning, Participation in Democracy, and Well-Being," Cohen looks at the disparity between where we are and where we say we want to go.

"There is a paradox in our preK–12 schools and within teacher education. Parents and teachers want schooling to support children's ability to become lifelong learners who are able to love, work, and act as responsible members of the community. Yet, we have not substantially integrated these values into our schools or into the training we give teachers," Cohen says.

Cohen hopes to see greater support for state departments of education to establish school climate measurement systems. He says states and districts also need guidelines, tools, and resources that would help them engage educators, students, parents or guardians, and community members in creating safer, more supportive, engaging, and challenging schools.

James Harvey, a senior fellow at the Center on Reinventing Public Education (www.crpe.org), holds a similar opinion about education's purpose. "K–12 education should prepare students for

life—for college, for work, for living within a family and within a community, and for participating effectively in the democratic process," he says.

Although future employment is probably necessary for most young people, K–12 education is more than just job training. "Schools have always been about developing students for life and work—and life is much more than earning a living; it is also living a life," Harvey says.

To Each His Own Definition

Cohen and Harvey are but two voices in a much larger ongoing global debate.

To engage the global community in a debate around the question, "What's the purpose of education?" Doug Belshaw and Andy Stewart founded Purpos/ed, a nonpartisan, location-independent organization. Launched in 2011, Purpos/ed (<http://purposed.org.uk>) fosters dialogue through activities such as the 500-word campaign, which encouraged people to take a stab at defining the purpose of education and then leading conversations on their own individual blogs.

Earlier this year, Adam Burk facilitated a rousing discussion on TED.com (which is now closed to new comments)

asking, "In your opinion, what should be the purpose of education?" When Burke closed the discussion, there were as many different opinions as there were respondents.

"There are 365 comments and 365 distinct articulations of what the purpose of education should be," Burk said. "The process to develop a consensus on this is beyond the scope and purpose of this conversation. However, I do hope that it is understood that this question and its answer are the shapers of education systems and, in turn, cultures."

Despite any dilemma that varying opinions and perspectives pose, healthy debate tends to inspire innovative ideas. However, as we face the challenge of educating young people for life in the 21st century, we also know that some things will remain constant.

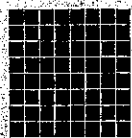
Dr. Gene R. Carter, chief executive officer and director of ASCD, explains in the *Good* article "What's the Purpose of School in the 21st Century?" that good teaching never goes out of style.

"We know that there is one education reform movement that works, and unsurprisingly, it's the same formula that has worked since we had those old textbooks, chalkboards, and red apples in the classroom. Research, policy, practice, and common sense confirm that a whole child approach to education will develop and prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow," Carter says.

Harvey agrees that there's no need to scrap what has served us well in the past: "The most significant skill [young people] can develop in the 21st century is the same skill that served them well in prior centuries: a mind equipped to think, the most important work skill of them all"

There still may be hope for our future. **EU**

—WILLONA M. SLOAN



THE WHOLE CHILD

Whole Child Podcast

The Whole Child Podcast: Changing the Conversation About Education informs and engages educators, parents, and

community members in a discussion about how to create sound education policies and practices that will ensure each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

Hosted by Molly McCloskey, managing director of ASCD's Whole Child Initiative, the podcast includes a diverse range of special guests who share their insights on how to move the whole child vision into action.

To listen, tune in on the first Thursday of every month or download archived podcasts at www.ascd.org/wholechildpodcast.

Quality Feedback

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"Once they feel they understand what to do and why, most students develop a feeling that they have control over their own learning," Brookhart says.

What Is the Goal?

Feedback must be tied clearly to a stated learning goal. Rick Stiggins, of the Assessment Training Institute, describes feedback as part of an assessment system that is completely open, with no surprises.

Teachers should present students with a list of achievement standards that they must master to be successful in the course of study. And students should understand that, at some point, they will be held accountable through a rigorous assessment, which will allow them to demonstrate their mastery of these standards. This summative assessment, which might culminate in test scores and grades, is completely separate from the

formative process, which is assessment for learning, Stiggins says.

Assessment for learning includes feedback for learning, and feedback should focus on a learning target. For example, when students are developing writing proficiency, a learning goal may be to understand writing with the proper voice. Instruction begins with a student-friendly description of the learning target accompanied by examples of writing that uses the voice both well and poorly so that students understand the continuum of how their writing will progress.

Feedback tells students where they are on the continuum, Stiggins says. They understand how they are progressing toward the goal and where they need to improve so that they can continue to progress. In this way, students generate their own feedback and become partners with teachers in setting goals for what comes next in their own learning.

Stiggins says that this kind of high-quality, descriptive feedback turns the "keys to the kingdom" over to students and shows them that they are in control of their learning.

teachers prioritize the feedback that they give students by selecting bite-size chunks and focusing on big-picture learning goals.

Another way for teachers to find time for quality feedback, Hook says, is to set a goal of talking to each student perhaps once a week, rather than daily. A two- to three-minute mini-conference can provide a great deal of usable feedback.

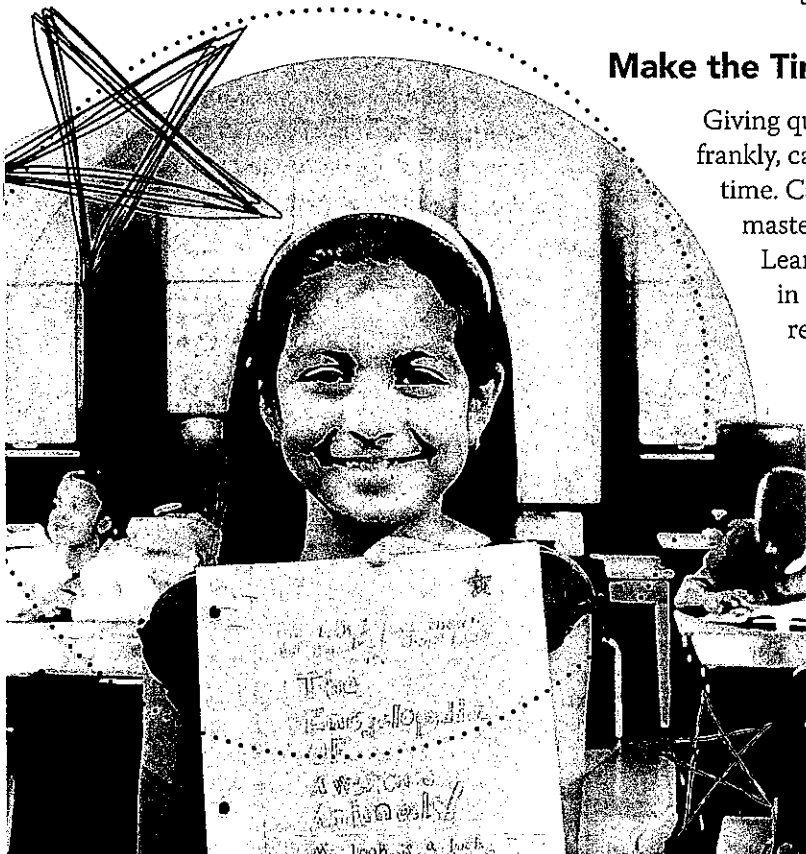
For example, a student struggling with defining a clear story line might benefit from this kind of brief, focused feedback that confirms success and then involves the student in a conversation about how to improve. She offers an example:

I can see that you are learning how to develop your story and draw a clear line from the conflict to the resolution. As a reader, I became a little confused in the character's second attempt to solve the problem. The twist seems to create another plot line. Writers try to connect new information back to the central idea for the reader. Is there a way you can clarify this idea? If it doesn't tie in smoothly, you may want to modify it. So let's talk this through. How could you connect the part about the character finding the highly confidential space vessel?

Stiggins suggests allowing students to lead conferences with their teachers as a way of helping them take control of their learning and demonstrate how they are working toward meeting the learning target.

Make the Time

Giving quality feedback, frankly, can take a lot of time. Carolyn Hood, a master trainer at the Learning Headquarters in San Diego, Calif., recommends that



Video: Watch Nancy Frey's webinar about using feedback to increase student achievement, "Feed Up, Feedback, Feed Forward: Making Formative Assessment Come Alive."

Don't have a smartphone? Watch the video at www.ascd.org/eu-july12-qr-video.

What's a QR code? Learn more about how to use QR codes at www.ascd.org/qrcodes.



Quick Tips

- **Tie the feedback to a specific learning goal.** Feedback should tell students where they are on the continuum, says Stiggins.
- **Provide information that students can use to improve their performance.** What actions do you want students to take? What are the growth areas and places where additional skill-building should take place?
- **Deliver feedback on student work in a timely manner.** Students need feedback while they are still working on the learning goal, not after they have moved on to something else.
- **Provide opportunities for students to participate in generating feedback rather than acting as passive receivers.** Brookhart suggests asking students questions that allow them to think about what they need help with. For example, she says, "Rather than telling the student all the things you notice about his or her work, start by asking, 'What are you noticing about this?' or 'Why did you decide to do it this way?'"
- **Feedback doesn't always have to be tied to a grade.** "When feedback is given along with a grade or evaluative comment, most students just hear judgment," Brookhart says. Look for ways to work feedback into the process before you hand out grades.
- **Help students self-regulate.** Jane E. Pollock, author of *Feedback: The Hinge That Joins Teaching and Learning*, recommends having students create goal-accounting templates so that they can track their daily effort toward meeting that goal and generate their own feedback.
- **When giving students feedback, take the time to think about what will help students actually improve.** "To be effective in supporting learning, feedback needs to focus on something the student did well along with suggestions for how to do better next time. If a teacher cannot find something positive to say, then feedback is not what needs to come next. Additional teaching needs to come next," Stiggins says.

Additional Resources

- *Accountability for Learning: How Teachers and School Leaders Can Take Charge* by Douglas B. Reeves
- *Advancing Formative Assessment in Every Classroom: A Guide for Instructional Leaders* by Susan M. Brookhart and Connie M. Moss
- *Choice Words* by Peter H. Johnston
- *Classroom Instruction That Works* by Robert J. Marzano, Debra Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock
- *Feedback: The Hinge That Joins Teaching and Learning* by Jane E. Pollock
- *Giving Effective Feedback to Your Students* (ASCD, DVD series)
- *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students* by Susan M. Brookhart EU

—KATIE RAPP

ASCD OUTSTANDING YOUNG EDUCATOR Award

Nominate an Outstanding Young Educator

Do you know a dedicated young educator? Through ASCD's Outstanding Young Educator Award (OYEA) program, the association recognizes professionals who are 40 or younger and make a positive difference in education every day.

The OYEA program celebrates teachers and administrators who exemplify a passion for excellence in educating the whole child, demonstrating leadership; improving student engagement, achievement, and learning; and contributing to the education profession.

The nominations process is currently open and will close on August 1, 2012. Here's how the process works:

- Nominations are submitted online.
- You can nominate a candidate or self-nominate. There are two award categories, teacher and administrator.
- The ASCD Selection Committee reviews the online nomination.
- Exemplary nominees are asked to submit a personal statement.
- Select candidates are invited to participate in a video interview.
- The committee selects a group of honorees.
- The OYEA winner is chosen from among the honorees.
- The award is presented to OYEA winners at ASCD's Annual Conference.

For more information about the OYEA program and to check out this year's winners—Matt McClure, superintendent of Cross County Schools in Cherry Valley, Ark., and Lilia Aguas, a teacher at Leconte Elementary School in Berkeley, Calif.—go to www.ascd.org/oyea. Also, listen to inspiring stories from past OYEA honorees at www.ascd.org/blog. EU

ASCD Community

Message from the ASCD President

Creating a Common Vision for Common Core State Standards Implementation

In preK–12 education circles, the phrase “Common Core State Standards” seems to have created a flurry of frenzied activity, striking terror in the hearts of teachers and administrators. According to the mission statement for the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the standards were designed to be consistent, clear, and relevant to the real world.

The problem, as I see it, stems from our usual historical approach to introducing new paradigms in our schools. It is no wonder that teachers and administrators, who may not want to embrace change, may have a “this too shall pass” attitude, because so many initiatives have come and gone. Typically, teachers and school leaders are not given enough support or resources or examples or time to integrate and incorporate what may represent solid and progressive changes in instructional practices and curriculum delivery.

As a nation, we have recognized that the playing field is not level for every child. Although the No Child Left Behind Act was designed to fix this problem, its punitive nature created additional issues for schools and the students we serve. If we are to revolutionize the way we learn, teach, and lead, policymakers and education

leaders need to rethink and reconstruct how we approach changes in curriculum and instruction.

Rather than frenzied implementation, we need to stop and develop well-thought-out processes that will provide examples, exemplars, and supportive research. The Common Core State Standards should be implemented in a manner that recognizes the needs of adult learners, understands the nature of the change process, and provides adequate support and resources that will promote success. A key element to this equation is long-range, planned professional development for both preservice and inservice educators.

I hope that educators will reject approaches that are based on fear and that will only derail progress. And, I hope that each educator in each community will focus on the goal of clearly defining expectations for 21st century learners.

Do you have questions about the Common Core State Standards? Read them for yourself. Get more information at www.corestandards.org.

Also, take advantage of the wealth of ASCD resources designed to help you implement the Common Core State Standards. Learn more at www.ascd.org/commoncore. **EU**



Mission Statement for the Common Core State Standards Initiative

“The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.”
(Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011)

